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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4756

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RHMFSS/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU PRIORITY

RHMFSS/425ABG IZMIR TU//CC// PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHMFSS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RHMFSS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR/ISA:NESA/DSCA// PRIORITY

RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU PRIORITY

RUEUITH/TLO ANKARA TU PRIORITY

RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEPGAB/MNF-I C2X BAGHDAD IZ PRIORITY

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SIPDIS

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DEPT. FOR EUR/SE AND NEA/I

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: REACTIONS TO CONTINUED AIRSTRIKES AGAINST
PKK

REF: ANKARA 3006 AND PREVIOUS

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Public reaction to repeated Turkish strikes against PKK targets in northern Iraq continues to be positive. The role the U.S. has played in sharing intelligence and deconflicting Iraqi airspace has also received a great deal of positive attention. Turkish media continue to note the support Turkey has received from the international community in its struggle with PKK terrorism. The Turkish General Staff (TGS) announced December 25 that airstrikes carried out December 16 and 22 resulted in immense destruction to PKK personnel and infrastructure in its camps and operation centers inside Iraq. Turkish media are reporting steps the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) is considering to follow-up on military strikes, including an enhanced repentance law or other form of amnesty for PKK rank and file and social/cultural, economic, and political steps to reach out to the majority Kurdish population in southeastern Turkey. END SUMMARY

2. (SBU) In the days subsequent to December 22 Turkish airstrikes against PKK targets in northern Iraq, Turkish media have reported extensively on TGS claims of damage inflicted on PKK operations. Overall reaction has been very positive, stressing the belief that Turkey has finally achieved an ability to strike back against terrorists who have long enjoyed safehaven across the border. Media have also focused on the U.S. role in sharing intelligence and deconflicting airspace over Iraq, as well as what they perceive as relatively muted reaction from Europe and elsewhere, to claim that Turkey's struggle with terrorism is finally receiving the support of the international community.

3. (SBU) In a December 25 announcement posted on its official website, TGS stated that its recent airstrikes against PKK targets in northern Iraq have resulted in extensive destruction to the PKK. The announcement claimed at least 150-175 PKK personnel who were not inside caves or shelters

at the time of the attacks were killed, and surmised a number more inside such shelters were killed. Some media quoted unnamed sources claiming at least 350 PKK casualties. In addition, TGS announced the destruction of three command centers, two communication centers, two training facilities, nine logistical bases, 182 shelters, ten anti-aircraft batteries with their crew, and 14 arms/ammunition depots. Pictures and video of the operations and their aftermath have also been released by TGS to Turkish media. We have no independent confirmation of any of these claims.

¶4. (SBU) Prime Minister Erdogan addressed the AKP parliamentary group on December 25, saying that Turkish forces are not targeting civilians during operations in Iraq and accusing those who claim otherwise of lying. Turkish media speculate Erdogan's comments are aimed at Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani, who has been quoted by Turkish media as claiming numerous civilian casualties. Erdogan said the PKK neither represents nor speaks for Turkey's citizens of Kurdish origin. It does not want Turkey's southeastern region to be developed so it can continue to try to claim ethnic Kurds there are suffering. Operations against the PKK are being carried out to make the border secure and bring peace and stability to the region. The world accepts that Turkey has the right to fight against terror and disinformation efforts by the PKK to the contrary will remain ineffective.

¶5. (SBU) Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Deniz Baykal said military operations should continue until the PKK is eradicated from Iraq. Nationalist Action Party (MHP) leader Devlet Bahçeli supports continued operations and said his party would oppose any legislative efforts to enhance the existing repentance law (Turkish Penal Code Article 221) into

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a broader form of amnesty.

¶6. (SBU) Pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) officials were the most outspoken critics of ongoing military action and the U.S. role. The DTP party assembly decided on December 25 that DTP members of parliament would participate in activities designed to form a human shield along the Turkey-Iraq border to force Turkey to cease military operations against the PKK. While laying a black wreath of protest in front of the consulate in Istanbul, DTP Istanbul MP Halik Aksoy said that among Kurds, "informing" on someone is among the lowest actions one can take. They see U.S. actions facilitating Turkish attacks against the PKK in this light.

¶7. (SBU) Some media outlets reported on a follow-on package they claim is now under consideration by the GOT with the aim of attracting PKKers to give up their armed struggle. Among the provisions:

- Expand upon existing Article 221 (repentance law) to offer witness protection to those members of the PKK who provide useful information that can be used against PKK leadership, to include new identities, plastic surgery, employment, etc. (NB: a new witness protection law is on parliament's agenda this week);
- Convene a group of "wisemen" (i.e., MPs from the region, imams, teachers, other community leaders) to contact privately families who have members in the PKK and urge them to convince their children to surrender;
- Ministers will travel weekly to SE Turkey to hear the problems of citizens; and,
- Implement new measures in education, health, sports, employment, transportation, and religious affairs to raise the standard of living in, and better integrate, SE Turkey with the rest of the nation. This would include greater economic investment in the region, increasing the number of doctors and health professionals working in the region, increasing the number of teachers from 17,000 to 25,000 in the region and building over 500 new schools, increasing

scholarships to students throughout the region, and increasing funding for agricultural, irrigation, and handicraft projects, including through expanded use of micro-credit programs.

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